

## ***C.A. Thayer* Stop A Story of Survival**

You're listening to "Maritime Voices" from San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park. I'm ranger Mark Neuweld. In this episode, we'll consider the history and significance of the schooner *C.A. Thayer*.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow once wrote:

"Build me straight, O worthy master,  
Staunch and strong, a goodly vessel,  
That shall laugh at all disaster,  
And with wave and whirlwind wrestle."

Built in 1895 for the West Coast lumber trade, the *C.A. Thayer* had an expected working life of 25 years. During this time, the lumber trade connected Pacific Coast people, towns and cities, and it was unmatched in its regional economic importance. Constructed of the same Douglas-fir that she frequently carried as cargo, the *C.A. Thayer* helped to build San Francisco and then to rebuild the city after the devastating earthquake and fire of 1906. Steam technology forced her retirement from the lumber trade, but the *Thayer* stayed alive by adapting to new careers. Supporting salmon and cod fishing operations in Alaska, she helped feed the people of the Pacific Coast. In 1950, she was the last large sailing vessel to make a commercial voyage on the West Coast. Of more than 500 sailing vessels built for the lumber trade, she is one of only two that still survive.

By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, old age had horribly deformed her hull. Her wood was rotten and splitting apart. Was she worth saving? In the words of Stephen Canright, "She brings us into physical contact with the thoughts and the experiences of her builders and crews, challenging us to learn from her. Her form and fabric speak of the lumber coast, her rigging and gear of the lives of her men. We must take the time to hear them, and then work to insure that these voices are not silenced." As a working schooner, Thayer served the people of the West Coast. As a National Historic Landmark, she currently serves the people of the world. The National Park Service preserves the *C.A. Thayer*, offering insight and inspiration to another generation.